

Alas! quod he, O Chauntecleer, alas!
I have to yow, quod he, ydoon trespas,
Inasmuche as I maked yow aferd,
Whan I yow hente, & broght out of the yerd;
But, sire, I dide it of no wikke entente;
Com down, and I shal telle yow what I mente;
I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so!
Nay thanne, quod he, I shrewe us bothe two,
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,

If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.
Thou shalt namoore, thurgh thy flaterye,
Do me to synge, and wynke with myn eye;
for he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!
Nay, quod the fox, but God yewe hym
meschaunce,
That is so indiscreet of governaunce,
That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees.

O, swich it is for to be reccheles,
And negligent, and truste on flaterye.
But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralite, goode men;
for Seint Paul seith, that al that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis.
Taketh the fruyt and lat the chaf be stille.

HEERE FOLWETH THE PHISIENS TALE

THER was, as telleth
Citus Livius,
A knyght that called
was Virginius,
fulfild of honour & of
worthynesse,
And strong of freendes
and of greet richesse.
This knyght a doghter
hadde by his wyf,
No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.
fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see;
for Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
Yformed hire in so greet excellence,
As though she wolde seyn, Lo, I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynthe a creature
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynthe; for I dar wel seyn
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn,
Outher to grave, or peynthe, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to countrefete.
for he that is the former principal
hath maked me his vicaire/general
To forme and peynthe erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe,
And for my werk right nothyng wol I axe;
My lord and I been ful of oon accord;
I made hire to the worship of my lord.
So do I alle myne othere creatures,

Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,
And brynge us to his heighe blisse. Amen.
Heere is ended the Nonnes Preestes Tale.

Words of the Host to the Nonnes Priest

SIRE Nonnes Priest,
oure Hooste seide anon,
Iblessed be thy breche,
and every stoon!
This was a murie tale of
Chauntecleer;
But, by my trouthe, if
thou were secular,
Thou woldest ben a
tredefoul aright;

for if thou have corage, as thou hast might,
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,
Ya, mo than sevene tymes sevenene!
Se, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,
So gret a nekke, and swich a large breast!
He loketh as a sparhawk with his eyen;
him nedeth nat his colour for to dyen
With brasile, ne with greyn of Doryngale,
Now, sire, faire falle yow for youre tale.
And after that, he with ful merie chere
Seide to another as ye shullen heere.

What colour that they han, or what figures,
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.

THIS mayde of age twelve yeer was and
tweye,
In which that Nature hadde swich
delit;

for, right as she kan peynthe a lilie whit,
And reed a rose, right with swich peynthe
She peynthe hath this noble creature
Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre,
Whereas by right swiche colours sholde be;
And Phebus dyed hath hire treses grete
Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete;
And if that excellent was hire beautee,
A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.
In hire ne lakked no condicioun
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.
As wel in goost as body chast was she;
for which she floured in virginitee
With alle humylitee and abstinence,
With alle temperaunce and pacience,
Discreet she was in answering alway,
Though she were wise as Pallas, dar I seyn;
hir facound eek, ful wommanly and pleyne;
No countrefeted termes hadde she
To seme wys; but after hir degree
She spak, and alle hire wordes moore & lesse
Sownynge in vertu and in gentillesse;
Shamefast she was, in maydens shame-
fastnesse,
Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse
To dryve hire out of ydel slogardie.

Bacus hadde of hire mouth right no maistrie;
for wyn and youthe dooth Venus encesse,
As men in fyr wol casten oile or gresse.
And of hir owne vertu unconstreyned,
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,
for that she wolde fleen the compaignye
for that she wolde tretene of folye,
Where likely was to tretene of daunces,
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces,
That been occasions of daliaunces.
Swich thynges maken children for to be
To soone rype and boold, as men may se,
Which is ful perilous, and hath been yooore,
for al to soone may she lerne loore
Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.

AND ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf,
That lordes doghtres han in governaunce,
Ne taketh of my wordes no displeaunce;
for lordes doghtres, only for two thynges;
Outher for ye han kept youre honestee,
Or elles ye han falle in freletee,
And known wel ynough the olde daunce,
And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce
for evermo; therefore, for Cristes sake
To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.
A theef of venysoun, that hath forlaft
his likournesse, and al his olde craft,
kan kepe a forest best of any man;
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol, ye han;
Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,
lest ye be dampned for youre wikke entente;
for who so dooth, a traitour is certeyn;
And taketh kepe of that that I shal seyn;
Of alle tresons, sovereyn pestilence
Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.

Efadres and ye moodres eek, also,
Though ye han children, be it oon or two,
Yours is the charge of al hir surveiaunce;
Whil that they been under youre governaunce;
Beth war, that by ensample of youre lyvynge,
Or by youre negligence in chastisyng,
That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye,
If that they doon, ye shul it deere abeye.

Under a shepherde softe and negligent
The wolf hath many a sheepe and lamb torent.
Suffiseth oon ensample now as heere,
for I moot turne agayne to my matere.
THIS mayde, of which I wol this tale
expresse,
So kepeth herself, hir neded no mais-
tresse;
for in hir lyvynge maydens myghten
fede,
As in a book, every good word or dede
That longeth to a mayden vertuous;
She was so prudent and so bountevous;
for which the fame outsprong on every syde,
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde;
That thurgh that land they preised hire echone
That loved vertu, save Envy allone,
That sory is of oother mennes wele,
And glad is of his sorwe and his unheele.
The doctour maketh this descripcioun.

This mayde upon a day wente in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mooder deere,
As is of yonge maydens the manere.
Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun,
And so bifel, this juge his eyen caste
Upon this mayde, avysynge hym ful faste
As she cam forby ther this juge stood.
Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde;
And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,
This mayde shal be myn, for any man.
Anon the feend into his herte ran,
And taughte hym sodeynly, that he by slyghte
The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte,
for certes, by no force, ne by no meede,
hym thoughte, he was nat able for to speede;
for she was strong of freendes, and eek she
Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee,
That wel he wiste he myghte hire nevere wyne
As for to make hire with hir body synne;
for which, by greet deliberacioun,
He sente after a cherl, was in the toun,
Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath toold
In secree wise, and made hym to ensue
He sholde telle it to no creature,
And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed.
Whan that assented was this cursed reed,
Glad was this juge, and maked him greet cheere,
And yaf hym yiftes, precieuse and deere.

AHN shapen was al hire conspiracie,
fro point to point, how that his lecherie
Parfourmed sholde been ful subtilly,
As ye shul heere it after openly,
Hoom gooth the cherl, that highte Claudius.
This false juge that highte Apius,
So was his name, for this is no fable,
But known for historial thyng notable,
The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute;
This false juge gooth now faste aboute
To hasten his delit al that he may.
And so bifel soone after, on a day,
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,
And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas.
This false cherl cam forth, a ful greet pas,
And seyde, Lord, if that it be youre wille,
As dooth me right upon this pitous bille,
In which I pleyne upon Virginius;
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witnessse
That sooth is that my bille wol expresse.
The juge answerde, Of this, in his absence,
I may nat yeve diffynityve sentence;
Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere;
Thou shalt have alle right, and no wrong heere.
VIRGINIUS cam to wite the juges wille,
And right anon was rad this cursed bille;
The sentence of it was as ye shul heere:
To yow, my lord, sire Apius so deere,
Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius,
How that a knyght, called Virginius,